

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1.-7. (canceled)

8. (currently amended) An endoscopic sample taker for collecting a sample of cartilage material, comprising:

a hollow shank having a distal end and a proximal end;

a scoop fixedly connected to said distal end of said hollow shank and defining a spoon-shaped trough having an opening and a closed end, ~~wherein an opening of said trough at least partially faces said proximal end of said hollow shank;~~

a handling means connected at said proximal end of said hollow shaft and having an actuation mechanism;

an actuating rod having a distal end and a proximal end axially movable in said hollow shank, said proximal end of said actuating rod releasably connectable with said actuation mechanism; and

a covering fastened proximate said distal end of said actuating rod, said covering being displaceable via said actuating rod between a closure position and an open position, wherein said open position of said covering allows ingress of the cartilage material to said trough and said closure position covers said trough to prevent loss of the cartilage material from said trough.

9. (previously presented) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 8, wherein said covering comprises a metal tongue.

10. (currently amended) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 8, wherein said trough comprises an edge ~~having a circumferential~~ defining a shape of said opening of said trough, and said covering sufficiently covering said trough in said closed position so that an entire sample within the volume defined between said opening and said closed end is prevented from leaving said trough ~~has a circumferential shape that corresponds to said circumferential shape of said edge of said trough.~~

11. (previously presented) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 8, further comprising a holding-down device for guiding said covering during the displacement thereof and holding said covering at said closure position.

12. (previously presented) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 8, wherein said scoop comprises an edge forming said trough and said edge is inclined at an angle relative to a longitudinal axis of said hollow shank.

13. (previously presented) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 12, wherein said covering is made of a bendable elastic material.

14. (previously presented) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 8, wherein

said covering comprises a front cutting edge for facilitating separation of the sample of cartilage material.

15. (new) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 8, wherein a volume defined between said opening and said closed end of said trough of said scoop is separated from a volume defined by said hollow shank such that the volume defined by said trough is not in direct communication with the volume defined by said hollow shank.

16. (new) The endoscopic sample taker of claim 8, wherein an entire volume defined between said opening and said closed end of said trough of said scoop is arranged distally from said distal end of said hollow shank by an axial distance.